

1975

The Missionaries

Samuel Allen

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in baskets of dusky denim, cotton shirts,
monotonous underwear.
Too-mature children—little girls, little boys
know dark joys and little else
or little more—
play at playing and do not play,
grow hard, go mean.
Now it seems the good have gone
or stay, invisible, indoors
or watch from waiting windows
for the rumbling wrecker's crane.
Come for the final shattering,
the final destruction of their names,
the destruction of dangerous halls
where anger plays its solemn games.

The craned hate hies to destroy,
strives to dismember, fragmentize,
dreams of dark denizens.
Rises, an ungainly Brontosaurus,
anachronistic, yet there
to destroy illusions and dreams
it cannot discern nor claim.

**Boston, 5:00 a.m.—11/74 /
Etheridge Knight**

Awake! For Mornings
Are the same as Nights.
The troops goosestep
Through the sleeping streets.

The Missionaries / Samuel Allen

Look, the hotel!
Was it arson?

Excitedly, my partner said
We should hurry on to the next mission.

But first things first, I said
A missionary must never, never
deviate from the plan
If he ever hopes to proselyte
this extraordinary man;
We must go back to the first hotel
pay and check out
before we burn the second one down;
It makes more sense, more sense,
I logically said;

When, down the street, we saw a crowd
in white powdered wigs
and red braided coats
assembling for a momentous event
in somebody's civilization.

Fascinated, we delayed our necessary mission.

Christ's Bracero / Ai

I hired you to pick corn, but you can quit anytime.
Inside the green husks are kernels of fire.
I don't say they aren't good.
I put sugar in my wine,
but it can't match the kernels crackling on your tongue.
It's up to you. Just take my advice;
stay out of the field at twilight.
You set to work, I slip down in my wicker chair,
counting 666, then I doze.

When I wake, smoke is spurting from the tips
of the unpicked corn.
The sun, the moon, two round teeth rock together
and the light of one chews up the other.
I hold my breath, until I see you limping forward.
You bow your head.
Yellow kernels fill your eyes and slide down your cheeks.
Your right foot rests on the ground
while your left, a split hoof, paws it, gently.
I feel the heat growing in my armpits, my crotch.